DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 050 356 CG 006 351

AUTHOR Hart, Gordon M., Jr.
TITLE [The Development of Effective Counselors in Terms of Counselor Performance.]
INSTITUTION American Personnel and Guidance Association, Washington, D.C.; Temple Univ., Philadelphia, Pa.
PUB DATE Apr 70
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the American Personnel and Guidance Association Convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey, April 4-8, 1971

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Counseling, *Counseling Effectiveness, *Counselor Acceptance, *Counselor Evaluation, *Counselor Performance, *Counselor Training, Interpersonal Relationship
IDENTIFIERS Carkhuff's Empathy Scale, Hart's Counselor Response Scale

ABSTRACT

In this study a group of graduate students in counseling courses were randomly placed in an experimental group and were trained to be open-minded in their attitudes. They were compared with a randomly selected control group who received no training. During a 10-week period, subjects in the experimental group completed 8 written exercises, and corresponded by mail with the experimenter regarding them. At the end of the experimental period, all subjects were evaluated by written attitude tests and by measures of their performance with a coached client in a 45-minute counseling session. Results showed that the trained subjects were significantly higher on the 3 performance measures. No differences were found on the written attitude measures. The levels attained by those briefly trained subjects were comparable to or higher than levels attained by advanced graduate students and counselors in the field. Implications are that the brief training (which was an indirect form of counseling) was effective. (Author)

ED050356

Gordon M. Hart, Jr.

Assistant Professor of Counselor Education

and Counseling Psychology

Temple University

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

APGA Convention

1971

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

CG 006 351

If it is possible that counselors can achieve results with clients after working with them for a limited number of sessions, how is this accomplished? Does a relationship of trust and openness between counselor and client preclude the establishment and attainment of the goals of a client? What are the personal dynamics of counselors which enables them to establish an effective relationship? Can counselors be taught to establish relationships in initial counseling sessions with most of the clients they see?

The research done in Hart (1970) was based on the following assumptions:

1. Counselors need to establish good relationships with clients if desirable outcomes are to be achieved.

2. Counselors can establish effective relationships in initial counseling sessions with clients.

3. Such effective relationships are composed of several factors among which are the attitudes of the counselor and what behaviors a counselor exhibits based on his attitudes.

4. Attitudes of the counselor toward his clients can be learned.

The attitude examined in this study was open-mindedness. Open-mindedness has been used synonomously with dogmatism as described by Rokeach (1960). However, it seems to serve a more heuristic purpose to think of open-mindedness as a general concept covering several sub-factors including dogmatism. This conceptualization might help to broaden the ideological base from the specific content of attitudes to a more encompassing and perhaps useful reliance upon how a person generally relates to people and to ideas of all sorts. In other words, the focus is not on what a white person believes the characteristics of Negroes to be but

what the attitudes of any person are regarding people whom he sees as different from him.

Several facets of open-mindedness could be postulated, but only a few such as intolerance of ambiguity (Budner, 1960, 1962), (Gruberg, 1969), and intellectualism (Yuker and Block, 1965 and Block and Yuker, 1966) have been measured. The open-minded counselor is tolerant and accepting of the attitudes and values of clients even though they differ from his own. Open-minded counselors consider all possible alternatives to the client's problem not just the alternatives which the counselors might favor. Furthermore the open-minded counselor is tolerant of ambiguous responses of his clients.

A question which quickly arises is whether these components of open-mindedness or any personal qualities are related to counseling effectiveness. Mezzano (1969) examined the relationship between dogmatism as measured by the Rokeach Dogmatism Scale and counselor effectiveness as measured by ratings done by a practicum supervisor. The results showed that students who were low in dogmatism were rated significantly higher in all three categories of understanding, congruence, and acceptance than those students who were higher in dogmatism.

McDaniel (1967) compared ratings of practicum supervisors with scores on Budner's Scale of Tolerance-Intolerance of Ambiguity and Block and Yuker's Intellectualism-Pragmatism Scale. Results indicated that there was a significant positive correlation between high supervisor ratings and both high tolerance of ambiguity ($P < .01$) and high intellectualism ($P < .05$).

Reliability of the Scale of Tolerance-Intolerance of Ambiguity as measured by Cronbach's alpha formula was +.49 with a test-retest reliability correlation of +.85. The Intellectualism-Pragmatism Scale has yielded a correlation coefficient of +.84 according to the Spearman-Brown formula and a correlation of +.84 according to a test-retest assessment.

Since a general concept termed open-mindedness can thus be identified which seems to be related to counseling effectiveness, how can this quality be fostered among students in a counselor training program?

Since the general attitude of open-mindedness is correlated with effectiveness in counseling, how can this attitude be taught? Many techniques of communication such as lectures, written materials, group discussions, and audiotapes have been evaluated in terms of knowledge subjects acquire and retain, attitude changes subjects report, and occasionally observed behavior changes. Since the focus of this study was on students in beginning counseling courses, a method of training was used which was somewhat familiar to them. Specifically, a series of eight written exercises was developed instead of using techniques such as videotapes or sensitivity groups which would be unfamiliar to most of the subjects.

Each exercise consisted of a one page vignette of a counseling session and an average of six questions about the vignettes to be answered by the person completing the exercise. The vignettes depict typical situations such as academic under-achievement, career planning, and peer relationships. Of the

three blocks of questions which follow each vignette or story, the first block of three questions is to be read but not answered in writing. The second block asks the reader to answer in writing what he would say to the client in the vignette as if the reader were the counselor in the vignette. The third block of three questions asks the reader to describe in writing what his own life experiences have been which are similar to that faced by the counselor in the vignette. The entire exercises are found in Hart (1970).

Procedures

The subjects were master's degree students enrolled in beginning counseling courses during winter term, 1970, at Michigan State University. This sample of sixty people was randomly assigned to either an experimental or control group. Both groups were given three attitude tests (Dogmatism Scale, Intellectualism-Pragmatism Scale and Scale of Tolerance-Intolerance of Ambiguity) before and after a ten week experimental period. During the ten week period, the experimental group completed the eight written exercises, each of which required them to read the vignette about a counseling situation and write answers to the questions following the vignette.

An interesting feature of the study was that the contact between the subjects and the experimenter was by mail. A similar technique was used successfully by Gilbert and Ewing (1965) in order to counsel students who were freshmen entering the University of Illinois. These authors found that students who

read and answered questions about their tests scores and vocational alternatives which they received by mail were as knowledgeable and understanding about the material as those students who were counseled face-to-face by a counselor at the university counseling center.

Training

Each week members of the experimental group individually completed one written exercise and mailed the answers to the experimenter who read the answers, commented on them with suggestions for improvement and returned his written comments by mail to the participants. The exercises and the experimenter's comments were structured to obtain maximum cognitive change in the direction of increased open-mindedness. W. J. McGuire (1966) has described what seems to be the most effective means of accomplishing cognitive change by summarizing the principles of Abelson (1959), Zajonc (1966, 1968), Rosenberg (1960).

More specifically the exercises were intended to present the students with a variety of stimulating situations in which open-mindedness by the counselor would be desirable. By acquainting the subjects with realistic counseling situations, having them commit themselves in writing and reinforcing them for their open-mindedness, it was hypothesized that they would become more open-minded in terms of performance on pencil and paper tests (lower dogmatism, higher tolerance of ambiguity, and higher intellectualism) and in terms of their performance in a counseling session with

a coached client. Meanwhile, the control group had no contact with the experimenter.

At the end of the ten week experimental period, all subjects in the experimental and control groups counseled a coached client in an observation room with a one-way mirror and were rated according to the Counselor Response Scale which was developed by the experimenter especially for this study. This instrument consists of six five point Likert-type rating scales used by a team of two independent raters to measure the degree of open-mindedness of the subject's verbal statements. These scales were drived from the three attitude measures used before and after the experimental treatment as measures of attitude change. In essence, this instrument represents an attempt to operationalize some of the concepts of the pencil and paper attitude measure into more overt and perhaps more interpretable behavior.

Following each verbal scale were four non-verbal scales which were used to assess the degree of open-mindedness as inferred from non-verbal gestures. These scales were derived from the research done by Ekman (1964, 1965), Ekman and Friesen (1967), Ganzhorn (1961), Mehrabian (1968), and Scheflen (1964).

In addition, audio-tapes of the sessions with the coached clients were rated according to the Empathy Scale developed by Truax (1967) and the Counselor Verbal Response Scale developed by Kagan and Krathwohl (1967). The Empathy Scale measured the level of empathic understanding of the subject's response to the client during the beginning, middle, and end of the counseling session. The Counselor Verbal Response Scale measured four categories

of counselor responses (affective or cognitive, understanding or non-understanding, specific or non-specific, exploratory or non-exploratory) by examining each of twenty consecutive counselor-client verbal units (client statement-counselor response).

Therefore, a total of three performance measures were used to see if differences between the experimental and control group could be detected according to verbal and non-verbal behaviors thought to be indicative of open-mindedness.

Hypotheses

The six statistical hypotheses that were formulated stated that differences would be found between the experimental and control groups as measured by the three attitude tests and the three performance tests. The scores of the experimental and control groups on those six tests were analyzed by analysis of variance, and differences were accepted at the .05 level of significance.

Findings

The three hypotheses which predicted differences between the experimental and control groups regarding open-mindedness as measured by the Dogmatism Scale, Intellectualism-Pragmatism Scale, and Scale of Tolerance-Intolerance of Ambiguity were not supported. The three hypotheses which predicted differences regarding observed behaviors related to open-mindedness as measured by the Counselor Response Scale, Empathy Scale, and Counselor Verbal Response Scale, were supported.

The Counselor Response Scale correlated .29 with the Empathy Scale and .21 with the Counselor Verbal Response Scale. In other words if a person scored favorably in the hoped for direction on the Counselor Response Scale, he was likely to score favorably on the Empathy Scale and the Counselor Verbal Response Scale. The size of the correlation indicates that there is some relationship but not a strong one between the newly developed Counselor Response Scale and the established Empathy Scale and Counselor Verbal Response Scale. This could mean that the tests measure similar but not identical characteristics.

An analysis of variance done on the six teams of raters using the Counselor Response Scale showed no significant difference among them. Therefore, the significant difference between the experimental and control groups was not due to random error on the part of the raters using the scale.

Discussion

An important point is that changes in open-mindedness were not detected by attitude tests but were detected by performance tests. It is possible that the attitude tests were either insensitive to change, or were able to be "slanted" by the subjects. A curious possibility is that subjects may have learned behaviors indicative of open-mindedness and used them with the coached client without having made a prior change in attitude.

The partial success of this experiment may be due to the anonymous nature of corresponding with the experimenter entirely

by mail. The lack of a face-to-face meeting with a professor and the length of time for introspection compared to more traditional methods of supervising and teaching counselors may be critical factors in working with beginning graduate students in counseling.

The use of written exercises and the lack of a face-to-face meeting between counseling supervisor and student cannot be universally recommended until it has been determined which students respond best to such an approach. If some students need the structure of written exercises, or fear the direct contact with a supervisor, then the value of the exercises and indirect contact for these students is clear.

The specific content of the exercises is adaptable to various specialities in counseling, such as elementary school counseling, and also to various problems and issues by using different vignettes. The use of these exercises by practicum supervisors or instructors in counseling courses could be valuable in developing both the attitudes and behaviors related to open-mindedness.

Although many alternate reasons can be suggested to account for the partial success of this study, the fact remains that the experimental group who completed the written exercises did better in the session with the coached client than the control group who did not complete the written exercises. On this basis, further use of these exercises for experimental purposes can be justified.

Other evaluation techniques may be tried, time spent on each exercise could be controlled, and the personality characteristics

of the subjects could be examined. Hopefully, these evaluation techniques will help to develop exercises which can be added to the repertoire of teaching devices used by counselor-educators throughout the country.

In the area of short-term counseling, there are indications that a single counseling session or a limited number of sessions can produce successful outcomes. If the counselor-client relationship contributes to this success, a good relationship should be established quickly. The research study described in this paper gives support to the hypothesis that effective relationships in terms of counselor attitudes and consequent behaviors, can be learned by prospective counselors.

References

Abelson, H.I. Persuasion: How opinions and attitudes are changed. New York: Springer Publishing Company, 1959.

Block, J. R. and Yuker, H.E. Correlates of an intellectual orientation among college students. Unpublished manuscript, Hofstra University, 1966.

Budner, S. An investigation of intolerance of ambiguity. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, 1960.

Budner, S. Intolerance of ambiguity as a personality variable. Journal of Personality, 1962, 30, 29-50.

Ekman, P. Body position, facial expression, and verbal behavior during interviews. Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 1964, 68, 295-301.

Ekman, P. Differential communication of affect by head and body cues. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1965, 2, 726-735.

Ekman, P. and Friesen, W. V. Head and body cues of emotion: A reformation. Perceptual and Motor Skills, 1967, 24, 711-724.

Ganzhorn, B. Non-verbal communication in counseling. School Counselor, 1961, 9, 28-30.

Gilbert, W. M. and Ewing, T. N. A comparison of programmed and face to face counseling. Unpublished manuscript. University of Illinois, 1965.

Gruberg, R. A significant counselor personality characteristic: Tolerance of ambiguity. Counselor Education and Supervision, 1969, 8, 119-124.

Hart, G. M. Development of open-mindedness through written exercises. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Michigan State University, 1970.

Kagan, N. and Krathwohl, D. R. Studies in human interaction: Interpersonal process recall stimulated by videotape. East Lansing, Mich. Educational Publication Services, College of Education, Michigan State University, No. RR20, December, 1967.

McDaniel, S. W. Counselor selection: An evaluation of instruments. Counselor Educatinn and Supervision, 1967, 6, 142-144.

Mehrabian, A. Relationship of attitude to seated posture, orientation, and distance. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1968, 10, 26-30.

Mezzano, J. A note on dogmatism and counselor effectiveness. Counselor Education and Supervision, 1969, 9, 64-65.

McGuire, W. J. The current status of cognitive consistency theories, in Feldman, S. (Ed.) Cognitive consistency. New York: Academic Press, 1966, pp. 1-46.

Rokeach, M. The open and closed mind. New York: Basic Books, 1960.

Rosenberg, M.J. (Ed.) Attitude organization and change: An analysis of consistency among attitude components. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960.

Scheflen, A.E. The significance of posture in communication systems. Psychiatry, 1964, 27, 316-331.

Truax, C.B. and Carkhuff, R.R. Toward effective counseling and psychotherapy. Chicago: Aldine, 1967.

Whiteley, J.M. and Jakubowski, P.A. The coached client as a research and training resource in counseling. Counselor Education and Supervision, 1969, 9, 19-29.

Yuker, H.E. and Block, J.R. Intellectual attitudes and college performance. Unpublished manuscript, Hofstra University, 1965.

Zajonc, R.B. Cognitive organization and process, in Sills, D. (Ed.) International encyclopedia of the social sciences. New York: The Macmillan Company - The Free Press, 1968, Vol. 15, pp. 615-622